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GUIDELINES REGARDING INITIAL REPORTS TO BE SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 8 (1) OF THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

Adopted by the Committee at its 736th meeting (twenty-eighth session) on 3 October 2001

Introduction

1. Pursuant to article 8, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol, States parties shall, within two years following the entry into force of the Protocol for the State party concerned, submit a report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child providing comprehensive information on the measures it has taken to implement the provisions of the Optional Protocol. Thereafter, pursuant to article 8, paragraph 2, of the Optional Protocol, States parties shall include in the reports they submit to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in accordance with article 44, paragraph 1 (b), of the Convention any further information with respect to the implementation of the Optional Protocol. States parties to the Optional Protocol who are not parties to the Convention shall submit a report every five years after the submission of the comprehensive report.

2. The Committee may, in the light of article 8, paragraph 3, of the Optional Protocol, request from States parties further information relevant to the implementation of the Optional Protocol.

3. Reports should provide information on the measures adopted by the State party to give effect to the rights set forth in the Optional Protocol and on the progress made in the enjoyment of those rights and should indicate the factors and difficulties, if any, affecting the degree of fulfilment of the obligations under the Optional Protocol.

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4. Copies of the principal legislative texts and judicial decisions, administrative and other relevant instructions to the armed forces, both of a civil and a military character, as well as detailed statistical information, indicators referred to therein and relevant research should accompany reports. In reporting to the Committee, States parties should indicate how the implementation of the Optional Protocol is in line with the general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely non-discrimination, best interests of the child, right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child. Moreover, the process of preparation of the report should be described to the Committee, including the involvement of governmental and non-governmental organizations/bodies in its drafting and dissemination. Finally, reports should indicate the date of reference used when determining whether or not a person is within an age limit (for instance, the date of birth of the person concerned or the first day of the year during which the person concerned reaches that age).

Article 1

5. Please provide information on all measures taken, including of a legislative, administrative or other nature, to ensure that members of the armed forces who have not attained the age of 18 years do not take a direct part in hostilities. In this respect, please provide information notably on:

(a) The meaning of "direct participation" in the legislation and practice of the State concerned;

(b) The measures taken to avoid a member of the armed forces who has not attained the age of 18 years being deployed or maintained in an area where hostilities are taking place and the obstacles encountered in applying these measures;

(c) When relevant, disaggregated data on members of the armed forces below the age of 18 years who were taken prisoner, despite not having participated directly in hostilities.

Article 2

6. Please indicate all the measures taken, including of a legislative, administrative or other nature, to ensure that persons who have not attained the age 18 years are not compulsorily recruited into the armed forces. In this regard, reports should provide, information on, inter alia:

(a) The process of compulsory recruitment (i.e. from registration up to the physical integration into the armed forces), indicating the minimum age linked to each step and at what point in that process recruits become members of the armed forces;

(b) The documents considered reliable which are required to verify age prior to acceptance into compulsory military service (birth certificate, affidavit, etc.);

(c) Any legal provision enabling the age of conscription to be lowered in exceptional circumstances (e.g. state of emergency). In this respect, please provide information on the age it can be lowered to and the process for and conditions of that change;

(d) For States parties where compulsory military service has been suspended but not abolished, the minimum age of recruitment set for compulsory military service and how, and under what conditions, compulsory service can be reactivated.

Article 3

Paragraph 1

7. Reports should contain the following:

(a) The minimum age set for voluntary recruitment into the armed forces, in accordance with the declaration submitted upon ratification or accession or any change thereafter;

(b) When relevant, disaggregated data (for example, by gender, age, region, rural/urban areas and social and ethnic origin, and military ranks) on children below the age of 18 years voluntarily recruited into the national armed forces;

(c) When relevant, the measures taken pursuant to article 38, paragraph 3, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to ensure that in recruiting those persons who have attained the minimum age set for voluntary recruitment but who have not attained the age of 18 years, priority is given to those who are oldest. In this respect, provide information on the measures of special protection adopted for the recruits under 18 years old.

Paragraphs 2 and 4

8. Reports should provide information on:

(a) The debate which has taken place in the State party prior to the adoption of the binding declaration and the people involved in that debate;

(b) When relevant, the national (or regional, local, etc.) debates, initiatives, or any campaign aimed at strengthening the declaration if it set a minimum age lower than 18 years.

Paragraph 3

9. With regard to the minimum safeguards that States parties shall maintain concerning voluntary recruitment, reports should provide information on the implementation of these safeguards and indicate, among other things:

(a) A detailed description of the procedure used for such recruitment, from the expression of intention to volunteer through to the physical integration into the armed forces;

(b) Medical examinations foreseen before volunteers can be recruited;

(c) The documentation required to verify the age of the volunteers (birth certificate, affidavit, etc.);

(d) Information that is made available to the volunteers, and to their parents or legal guardians, allowing them to formulate their own opinion and to make them aware of the duties involved in the military service. A copy of any materials used for this purpose should be annexed to the report;

(e) The effective minimum service time and the conditions for early discharge; the application of military justice or discipline to recruits under 18 and disaggregated data on the number of such recruits being tried or in detention; the minimum and maximum sanctions foreseen in case of desertion;

(f) The incentives used by the national armed forces for encouraging volunteers (scholarships, advertising, meetings at schools, games, etc.).

Paragraph 5

10. Reports should provide information on:

(a) The minimum age of entry into schools operated by or under the control of the armed forces;

(b) Disaggregated data on schools operated by or under the control of the armed forces, including their number, the type of education provided and the proportions of academic education and military training in the curricula; length of the education; academic/military personnel involved, educational facilities, etc.;

(c) The inclusion in the school curricula of human rights and humanitarian principles, including in areas relevant to the realization of the rights of the child;

(d) Disaggregated data (for example, by gender, age, region, rural/urban areas and social and ethnic origin) on the students attending these schools; their status (members or not of the armed forces); their military status in the case of a mobilization or of an armed conflict, a genuine military need or any other emergency situation; their right to leave such schools at any time and not to pursue a military career;

(e) The measures taken to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity, and any complaint mechanisms available in this regard.

Article 4

11. Please provide information on, inter alia:

(a) The armed groups operating on/from the territory of the State party or with sanctuary on its territory;

(b) The status of any negotiations between the State party and armed groups;

(c) Disaggregated data (for example, by gender, age, region, rural/urban areas and social and ethnic origin, time spent in the armed groups, and time spent participating in hostilities) on children who have been recruited and used in hostilities by armed groups and on those who have been arrested by the State party;

(d) Any written or oral commitment made by armed groups not to recruit and use children below the age of 18 in hostilities;

(e) Measures adopted by the State party aimed at raising awareness amongst armed groups and within communities of the need to prevent the recruitment of children below the age of 18 and of their legal obligations with regard to the minimum age set in the Optional Protocol for recruitment and participation in hostilities;

(f) The adoption of legal measures which aim at prohibiting and criminalizing the recruitment and use in hostilities of children under the age of 18 by armed groups and relevant judicial decisions;

(g) The programmes (e.g. birth registration campaigns) to prevent children who are at highest risk of recruitment or use by armed groups, such as refugee and internally displaced children, street children, orphans, from being so recruited or used.

Article 5

12. Please indicate those provisions of the national legislation or of international instruments and international humanitarian law applicable in the State party, which are more conducive to the realization of the rights of the child. Reports should also provide information on the status of ratification by the State party of the main international instruments concerning children in armed conflict and on other commitments undertaken by the State party concerning this issue.

Article 6

Paragraphs 1 and 2

13. Indicate the measures adopted to ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of the provisions of the Optional Protocol within the jurisdiction of the State party, including information on:

(a) Any review of domestic legislation and amendments introduced;

(b) The legal status of the Optional Protocol in national law and its applicability before domestic jurisdictions, as well as, when relevant, the intention of the State party to withdraw existing reservations made to the Optional Protocol;

(c) The governmental departments or bodies responsible for the implementation of the Optional Protocol and their coordination with regional and local authorities, as well as with civil society;

(d) The mechanisms and means used for monitoring and periodically evaluating the implementation of the Optional Protocol;

(e) Measures adopted to ensure the training of peacekeeping personnel on the rights of the child, including the provisions of the Optional Protocol;

(f) The dissemination in all relevant languages of the Optional Protocol to all children and adults, notably those responsible for military recruitment, and the training offered to all professional groups working with and for children.

Paragraph 3

14. When relevant, please describe all measures adopted with regard to disarmament, demobilization (or release from service), and the provision of appropriate assistance for the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of children, taking due account of the specific situation of girls, including information on:

(a) The children involved in that procedure, on their participation in such programmes, and on their status with regard to the armed forces and armed groups (e.g. when do they stop being members of the armed forces or groups?); the data should be disaggregated by, e.g., age and sex;

(b) The budget allocated to these programmes, the personnel involved and their training, the organizations concerned, cooperation among them, and participation of civil society, local communities, families, etc.;

(c) The various measures adopted to ensure the social reintegration of children, e.g. interim care, access to education and vocational training, reintegration in the family and community and relevant judicial measures, taking into account the specific needs of the children concerned, depending notably on their age and sex;

(d) The measures adopted to ensure confidentiality and protection of children involved in such programmes from media exposure and exploitation;

(e) The legal provisions adopted to criminalize the recruitment of children and whether that crime comes within the competence of any specific justice-seeking mechanisms established in the context of conflict (e.g. war crimes tribunal, truth and reconciliation bodies); the safeguards adopted to ensure that the rights of the child as a victim and as a witness are respected in these mechanisms in light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(f) The criminal liability of children for crimes they may have committed during their stay with armed forces or groups and the judicial procedure applicable, as well as safeguards to ensure that the rights of the child are respected;

(g) When relevant, the provisions of peace agreements dealing with the disarmament, demobilization, and/or physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child combatants.

Article 7

15. Reports should provide information on cooperation in the implementation of the Optional Protocol, including through technical cooperation and financial assistance. In this regard, reports should provide information, inter alia, on the extent of the technical cooperation or financial assistance which the State party has requested or offered. Please indicate if the State party is in a position to provide financial assistance and describe the multilateral, bilateral or other programmes that have been undertaken with that assistance.

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